



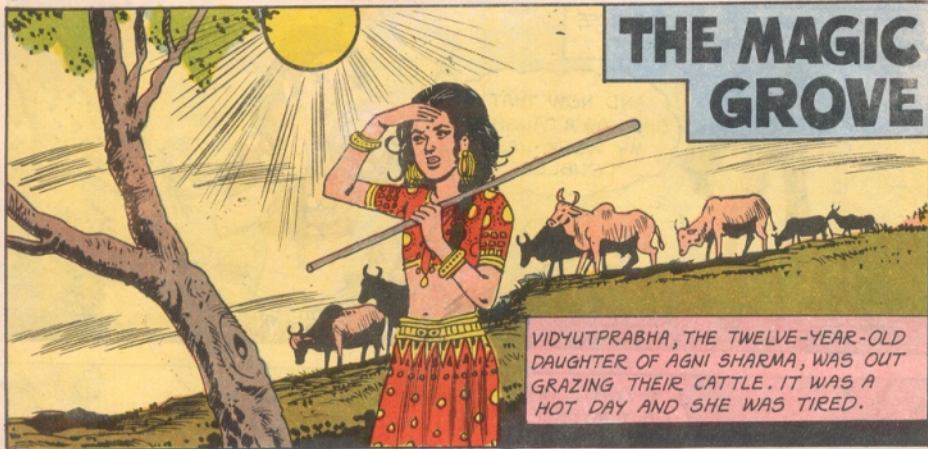
No. 168 Rs. 3 50

# THE MAGIC GROVE



A JAIN STORY

# THE MAGIC GROVE



VIDYUTPRABHA, THE TWELVE-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER OF AGNI SHARMA, WAS OUT GRAZING THEIR CATTLE. IT WAS A HOT DAY AND SHE WAS TIRED.

WHEN HER MOTHER DIED, FOUR YEARS AGO, THE BURDEN OF RUNNING THE HOUSEHOLD, HAD FALLEN ON HER.



SHE HAD TRIED TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM, SOON AFTER HER MOTHER'S DEATH.

FATHER, I FIND IT DIFFICULT TO RUN THE HOUSEHOLD ALONE. WHY DON'T YOU MARRY AGAIN?



IT'S A GOOD IDEA, VIDYUTPRABHA. I'LL DO AS YOU SAY.





BUT AGNI SHARMA'S SECOND WIFE WAS LAZY AND SHIRKED WORK.

AND NOW THAT SHE HAS A DAUGHTER, MY WORK HAS DOUBLED.



SUDDENLY —

WHAT'S THAT? WHO'S THERE?



A SNAKE!

DON'T BE AFRAID. I WILL NOT HARM YOU.



SOME SNAKE CHARMERS ARE AFTER ME. PLEASE PROTECT ME.

IT MAY BE A SNAKE. BUT IT IS IN TROUBLE AND NEEDS MY HELP.













THE NEXT MOMENT, WONDER OF WONDERS, A SHADY GROVE APPEARED ABOVE VIDYUTPRABHA'S HEAD. IT HAD TREES LADEN WITH JUICY FRUIT AND FRAGRANT FLOWERS.

HERE YOU ARE! WHENEVER YOU ARE OUT OF YOUR HOUSE, THIS GROVE WILL SHELTER YOU. NEVER AGAIN WILL YOUR CATTLE HAVE TO SUFFER THE HEAT. AND...



...IF EVER YOU NEED ME, YOU ONLY HAVE TO THINK OF ME. I'LL BE THERE.



AS SOON AS THE DEVA VANISHED —

AH! GRAZING THE CATTLE WILL NO LONGER BE A TEDIOUS, TIRING, TASK.



AND AFTER A DAY IN THIS DELIGHTFUL, COOL GROVE MY CHORES AT HOME, TOO, WILL NO LONGER BE TIRESOME.

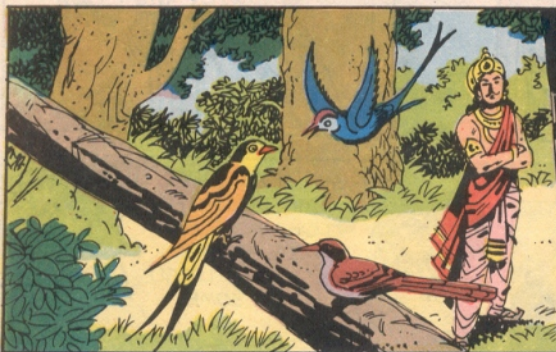




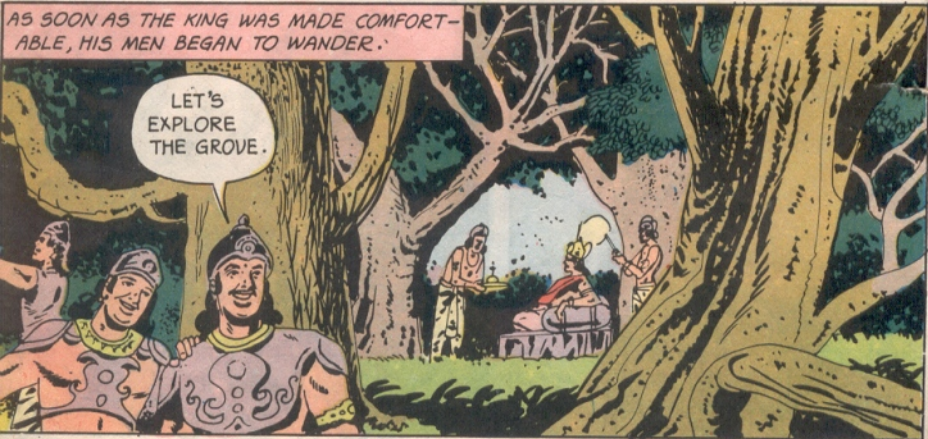
WITH THESE PLEASANT THOUGHTS, SHE SOON FELL ASLEEP.



A FEW MINUTES LATER, THE KING OF PATALIPUTRA, CAME BY WITH HIS RETINUE.

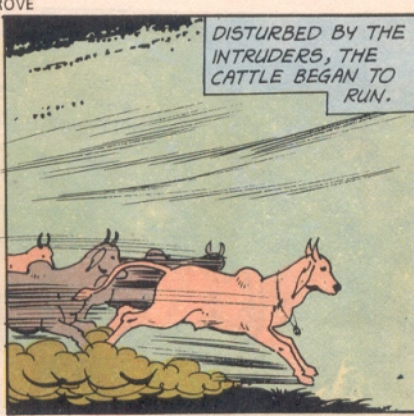


AS SOON AS THE KING WAS MADE COMFORT-  
ABLE, HIS MEN BEGAN TO WANDER.



LET'S  
EXPLORE  
THE GROVE.





DISTURBED BY THE  
INTRUDERS, THE  
CATTLE BEGAN TO  
RUN.



MEANWHILE,  
VIDYUTPRABHA  
AWOKE WITH  
A START.

HOW LONG HAVE  
I BEEN ASLEEP?  
IT'S ALMOST  
MIDDAY!



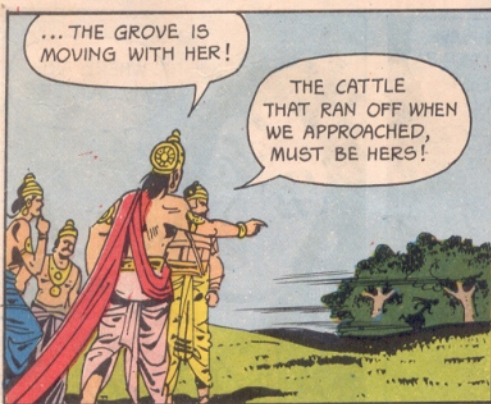
WHERE ARE  
MY CATTLE?



WHERE  
DID THAT  
GIRL COME  
FROM?



SUDDENLY —



AS SOON AS VIDYUTPRABHA RETURNED —

IS SHE AN APSARA\*?  
WHOMEVER SHE IS,  
HER PLACE IS IN  
A PALACE. CERTAINLY  
NOT AMONG THESE  
COWS!



\* CELESTIAL NYMPH



THEN GO TO HER  
AND TELL HER  
THAT I WANT TO  
MAKE HER MY  
QUEEN.



O WONDROUS MAID,  
OUR KING WISHES  
TO WED YOU. ARE  
YOU WILLING?

IT WOULD BE  
MORE PROPER  
FOR YOU TO  
SPEAK TO MY  
FATHER, SIR.



WHO IS YOUR  
FATHER? WHERE  
CAN I FIND  
HIM?

WE LIVE IN THE  
FIRST VILLAGE  
THAT YOU SEE  
OUTSIDE THIS  
GROVE.



THE MINISTER HAD NO TROUBLE FINDING THE  
HOUSE OF AGNI SHARMA.

SIR, I COME WITH A  
PROPOSAL FOR THE  
HAND OF YOUR  
DAUGHTER WHO  
TENDS COWS IN  
THE FOREST  
NEAR BY.

FOR VIDYUTPRABHA?  
BUT WHO IS IT  
FROM?





THE KING OF  
PATALIPUTRA.

THE KING OF  
PATALIPUTRA?  
I DON'T  
UNDERSTAND.

WHEN THE MINISTER TOLD HIM ALL  
THAT HAD HAPPENED IN THE FOREST—

I AM HONOURED,  
SIR. PLEASE LEAD  
ME TO HIS MAJESTY.

WHEN THEY STOOD BEFORE THE KING —

GOOD SIR,  
I WISH TO  
MARRY YOUR  
DAUGHTER.

I AM  
HONOURED,  
YOUR  
MAJESTY.

IT IS NOT PROPER  
THAT MY QUEEN'S  
FATHER LIVE IN  
POVERTY. HENCEFORTH THE  
REVENUE OF TWELVE  
VILLAGES SHALL BE YOURS;  
AND YOUR DAUGHTER'S  
NEW NAME SHALL BE  
ARAMASHOBHA.

SENDING THE MINISTER AHEAD  
TO ARRANGE A FIT RECEPTION,  
THE KING LEFT FOR PATALI-  
PUTRA WITH ARAMASHOBHA  
AND HIS RETINUE.



AT PATALIPUTRA, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HER LIFE, ARAMASHOBHA LED A LIFE OF EASE AND COMFORT.



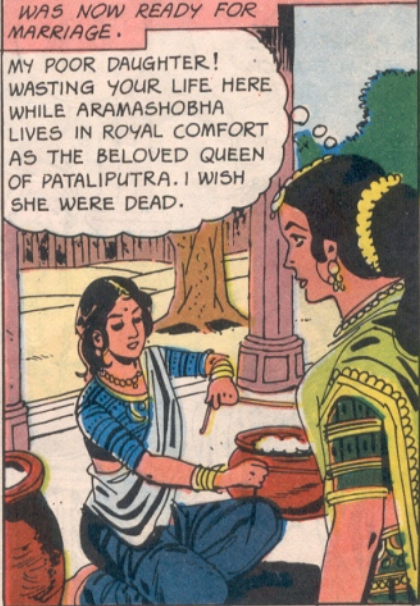
MEANWHILE HER STEP-MOTHER WAS BURNING WITH ENVY AT HER GOOD FORTUNE.

I SHOULD NEVER  
HAVE LET THE  
GIRL GO OUT TO  
GRAZE THE COWS.



AS THE YEARS PASSED, HER ANGER  
GREW. BESIDES, HER OWN DAUGHTER  
WAS NOW READY FOR  
MARRIAGE.

MY POOR DAUGHTER!  
WASTING YOUR LIFE HERE  
WHILE ARAMASHOBHA  
LIVES IN ROYAL COMFORT  
AS THE BELOVED QUEEN  
OF PATALIPUTRA. I WISH  
SHE WERE DEAD.









THERE ! NO ONE  
WILL SUSPECT THAT  
IT'S POISONED !  
LEAST OF ALL  
THAT GIRL !



SHE PUT IT INTO A POT ...



...AND TOOK IT TO HER HUSBAND .

ASK HER NOT  
TO SHARE IT WITH  
ANYONE. THEY  
MAY MAKE FUN  
OF OUR HUMBLE  
GIFT.

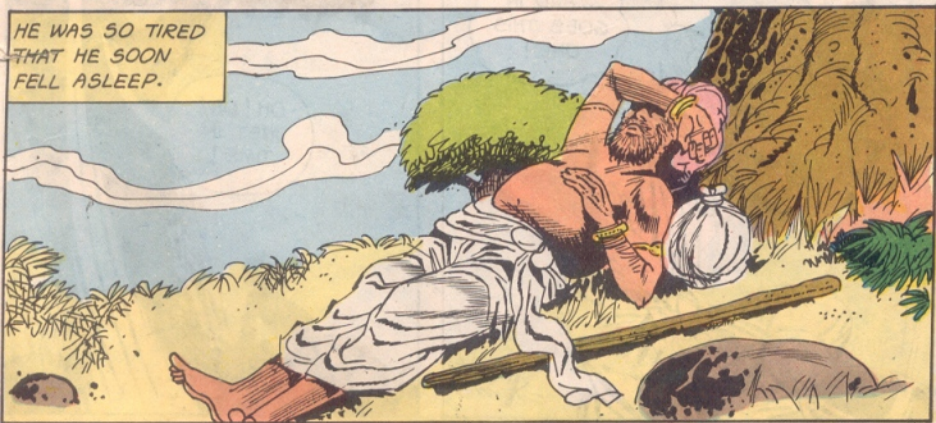


TAKING THE POT, AGNI SHARMA SET OUT  
FOR PATLIPUTRA. ON THE WAY —

WHAT A SULTRY  
DAY IT IS ! I'LL  
HAVE TO REST  
FOR A WHILE .



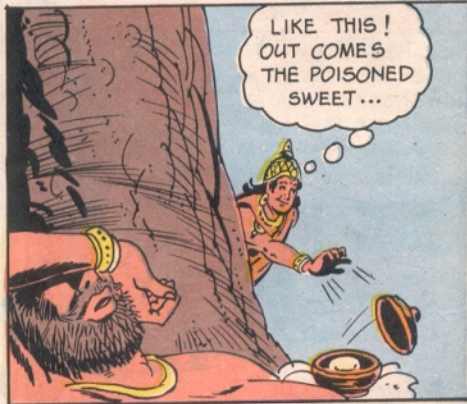
HE WAS SO TIRED  
THAT HE SOON  
FELL ASLEEP.





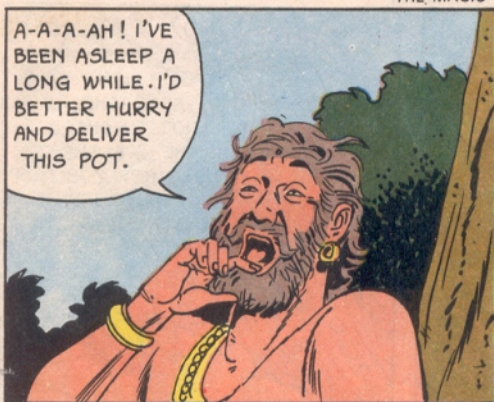
HEARING HIS SNORES,  
A YAKSHA \* WHO  
WAS ON THAT TREE,  
CAME OUT.

WHAT DOES MY SIXTH  
SENSE TELL ME?  
ARAMASHOBHA'S STEP-  
MOTHER WANTS TO  
POISON HER!





A-A-A-AH! I'VE BEEN ASLEEP A LONG WHILE. I'D BETTER HURRY AND DELIVER THIS POT.



HE PICKED UP THE POT AND CONTINUED WALKING.



WHEN HE REACHED THE PALACE, HE WAS LED BEFORE THE KING.

MAY YOUR MAJESTY EVER PROSPER!

WELCOME, SIR. WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE?



MY WIFE HAS SENT THIS SMALL GIFT FOR THE QUEEN, HER DAUGHTER.

AFTER SO MANY YEARS! I WONDER WHAT IT COULD BE!

TAKE THIS TO THE QUEEN AND HAVE SOME ORNAMENTS AND RICH GARMENTS BROUGHT HERE.





WHEN THEY WERE BROUGHT—



AS SOON AS AGNI SHARMA LEFT, THE KING WALKED INTO ARAMASHOBHA'S CHAMBER.





WHEN AGNI SHARMA RETURNED HOME —



DID YOU  
GIVE IT TO  
HER? DID YOU  
SEE HER  
EAT IT?

HOW COULD  
I? SHE'S A  
QUEEN. THE POT  
WAS SENT TO  
HER ROOM.



OH, WELL! SHE IS SURE  
TO HAVE EATEN IT ALL  
HERSELF. I'LL HAVE TO  
BE PATIENT AND WAIT  
FOR THE NEWS OF  
HER DEATH.

SHE WAITED IN  
VAIN. THEN ONE  
DAY —



PERHAPS THE POISON  
WAS NOT DEADLY ENOUGH.  
I'LL SEND HER ANOTHER  
SWEETMEAT WITH A  
DEADLIER ONE.



BUT THE SECOND TIME TOO, THE YAKSHA FOILED HER EVIL PLANS BY REPLACING THE POISONED SWEETMEAT WITH A CELESTIAL ONE.



WHEN AGNI SHARMA RETURNED HOME AFTER HIS VISIT TO THE PALACE —

THIS TIME, TOO, I DID NOT SEE ARAMASHOBHA. BUT I LEARN'T THAT SHE IS EXPECTING A BABY.

SHE'LL BE DEAD BEFORE THAT HAPPENS. NOTHING CAN SAVE HER.



MONTHS PASSED, BUT NO NEWS OF THE QUEEN'S DEATH REACHED HER. SO SHE MADE YET ANOTHER SWEETMEAT WITH THE DEADLIEST POISON SHE KNEW OF.

TAKE THIS TO ARAMASHOBHA AND BRING HER BACK WITH YOU. SHE MUST DELIVER HER FIRST CHILD IN HER MOTHER'S HOME. IF THE KING DOES NOT AGREE, FORCE HIM TO.

I WILL TRY.



AS SOON AS AGNI SHARMA LEFT, THE STEP-MOTHER SENT FOR THE VILLAGE WELL-DIGGER.

I WANT A WELL DUG IN MY BACKYARD. IT SHOULD BE DEEPER THAN ANY WELL IN THE VILLAGE.





NOW, EVEN IF THE POISON FAILS, THE WELL WILL NOT!



MEANWHILE, AS BEFORE, THE YAKSHA WAS ALERT AND THE POT AGNI SHARMA GAVE TO THE KING CONTAINED A HARMLESS SWEETMEAT.



YOUR MAJESTY, I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE ARAMASHOBHA HOME. HER FIRST CHILD MUST BE BORN IN HER MOTHER'S HOME.



YOUR MAJESTY, OF COURSE, MUST BE AWARE OF THE CUSTOM.

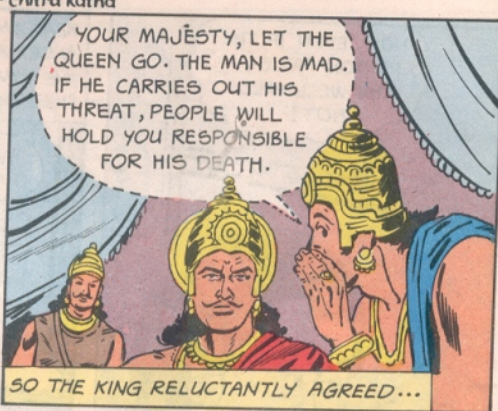
IMPOSSIBLE! I CANNOT LET HER GO WITH YOU.







IF YOU DON'T  
SEND HER, I'LL  
GIVE UP MY  
LIFE RIGHT  
HERE.



YOUR MAJESTY, LET THE  
QUEEN GO. THE MAN IS MAD.  
IF HE CARRIES OUT HIS  
THREAT, PEOPLE WILL  
HOLD YOU RESPONSIBLE  
FOR HIS DEATH.

SO THE KING RELUCTANTLY AGREED...

... AND ARAMASHOBHA SET OFF WITH HER FATHER.

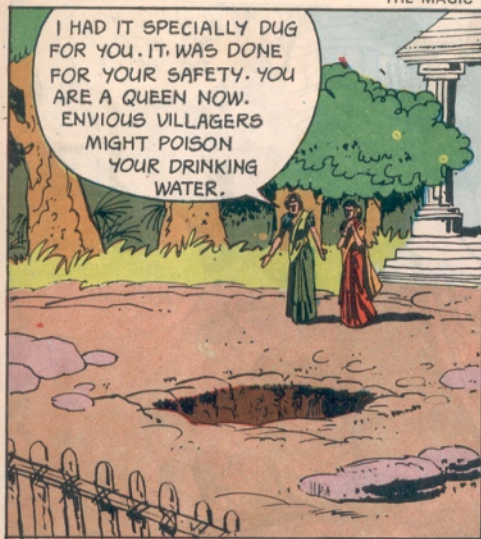


AT HOME, A FEW DAYS AFTER ARAMASHOBHA'S SON WAS BORN, SHE WAS OUT IN  
THE BACKYARD WITH HER STEP-MOTHER.

MOTHER, WHEN  
WAS THIS WELL  
DUG? IT WASN'T  
THERE WHEN  
I LEFT FOR  
PATALIPUTRA.







THE WICKED STEP-MOTHER HAD PUSHED ARAMASHOBHA INTO THE WELL ! BUT SHE HAD FORGOTTEN ONE THING.

OH GOD ! THE GROVE TOO HAS DISAPPEARED ! I HADN'T THOUGHT OF THAT !



MEANWHILE —





THE DEVA HEARD HER CALL.



HOW DID YOU  
FALL INTO  
THE WELL?

M-MY...  
STEP-MOTHER  
...SHE PUSHED...  
ME ... IN.



I'LL SLAY HER THIS  
MINUTE AND TAKE  
YOU TO THE  
PALACE.

NO! NO,  
PLEASE DON'T!  
THINK OF MY  
FATHER.



ALL RIGHT. THEN I'LL  
BUILD A HOME FOR  
YOU IN THE NETHER-  
WORLD BELOW THIS  
WELL, WHERE YOU  
SHALL KNOW NO  
WANT.

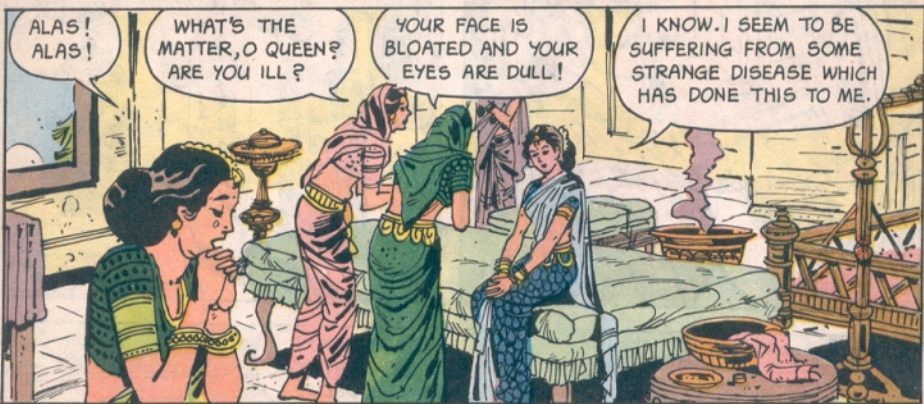




MEANWHILE WHEN THE MAIDS WHO HAD COME WITH THE MINISTER TO TAKE ARAMASHOBHA HOME, ENTERED HER CHAMBER, THEY HEARD THE STEP-MOTHER WAILING.



ALAS, MY DAUGHTER! SOMEONE HAS CAST AN EVIL EYE ON YOUR GOOD FORTUNE. WHERE IS YOUR BEAUTY? YOUR GRACE? WHAT WILL THE KING SAY?



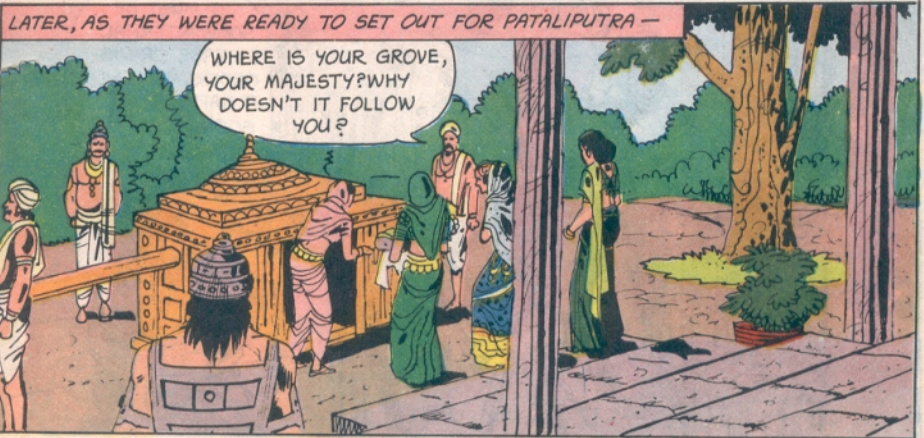
ALAS!  
ALAS!

WHAT'S THE MATTER, O QUEEN? ARE YOU ILL?

YOUR FACE IS BLOATED AND YOUR EYES ARE DULL!

I KNOW. I SEEM TO BE SUFFERING FROM SOME STRANGE DISEASE WHICH HAS DONE THIS TO ME.

LATER, AS THEY WERE READY TO SET OUT FOR PATALIPUTRA —



WHERE IS YOUR GROVE, YOUR MAJESTY? WHY DOESN'T IT FOLLOW YOU?



OH! IT HAS GONE TO THE WELL TO GET WATERED. IT WILL SOON FOLLOW.

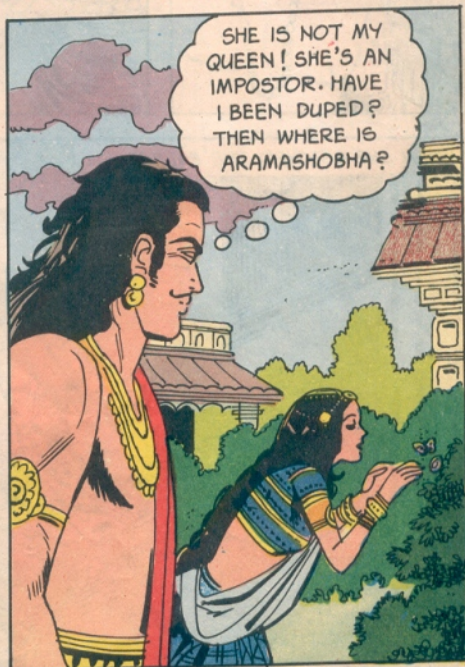
WHEN THEY REACHED THE PALACE AT PATALIPUTRA, THE KING CAME OUT TO RECEIVE THEM.

AH! WHAT A BEAUTIFUL CHILD!

BUT WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU, MY BELOVED?

IT MUST BE SOME INTERNAL DISEASE OR DISORDER, MY LORD. IT HAPPENED SOON AFTER THE PRINCE WAS BORN.







MEANWHILE THOUGH SAFE AND COMFORTABLE, ARAMA-SHOBHA WAS UNHAPPY.

O DEVA, I LONG FOR MY SON. I WANT TO HOLD HIM IN MY ARMS.

ALL RIGHT, TONIGHT I'LL TRANSPORT YOU TO HIM. BUT YOU MUST RETURN BEFORE SUNRISE. IF YOU DON'T...

...A DEAD SNAKE WILL DROP FROM YOUR HAIR AND I CAN NEVER AGAIN COME TO YOUR AID.

I WILL SEE THAT I FULFIL THE CONDITION.

THAT NIGHT —

I'LL TAKE SOME FLOWERS AND FRUIT FROM MY GROVE BEFORE I LEAVE.

WHEN SHE REACHED THE PALACE —

OH, MY SON! MY DARLING SON!



ALL TOO SOON, THE HOURS FLEW PAST AND IT WAS TIME FOR HER TO DEPART.

I'LL COME BACK TONIGHT. TILL THEN, FAREWELL.



THE NEXT MORNING, WHEN THE BOY'S MAID AWOKE —

WHAT'S THIS? WHO COULD HAVE LEFT THOSE FRUITS AND FLOWERS HERE?



SHE IMMEDIATELY REPORTED THE MATTER TO THE KING.

...AND THEY ARE EXACTLY LIKE THE ONES THAT GREW IN THE QUEEN'S GROVE.

ASK THE QUEEN TO SEE ME IN THE PRINCE'S CHAMBER.



LATER —

HOW DID THESE GET HERE?

HOW DID THEY?

OH! THOSE! I BROUGHT THEM FOR OUR SON, FROM MY GROVE.









POOR ARAMASHO-  
BHA, HOW SAD SHE  
SOUNDS. HOW  
MUCH SHE MUST  
SUFFER!

WILL I EVER  
BE ABLE TO  
BE WITH  
YOU ALL  
DAY?

WHEN IT WAS ALMOST SUNRISE —

ALAS ! I MUST  
LEAVE YOU  
NOW.

NO, YOU WON'T,  
ARAMASHOBHA.

MY LORD, YOU !  
PLEASE LET ME GO.  
DON'T STOP ME  
NOW. I'LL COME  
BACK TONIGHT AND  
TELL YOU ALL.

NO, ARAMASHOBHA.  
NOW THAT I'VE FOUND  
YOU, I WILL NOT  
LET YOU GO.



PLEASE, MY  
LORD, IF YOU  
DON'T...

NO, MY QUEEN.  
TONIGHT IS TOO FAR  
OFF. TELL ME NOW.  
TELL ME ALL. TILL  
YOU DO, I WON'T  
LET GO OF YOUR  
HAND.

WHAT SHALL I DO ?  
IF I BEGIN TO TELL HIM  
ALL THAT HAPPENED,  
I WON'T FINISH BEFORE  
DAWN. IF I DON'T, HE  
WON'T LEAVE ME.  
I HAVE NO CHOICE.

SO SHE BEGAN HER TALE,  
TRYING TO TELL IT AS  
FAST AS SHE COULD.

...AND THE DEVA  
SAID THAT IF  
I DIDN'T RETURN  
BEFORE SUNRISE...

... A DEAD  
SNAKE WOULD  
DROP FROM  
MY...

... HAIR. ALAS!  
IT'S HAPPENED. I AM  
UNDONE. I HAVE  
LOST MY DEVA. TO  
WHOM WILL  
I TURN NOW ?



AND ARAMASHOBHA FAINTED.



WHEN SHE CAME TO —



AS FOR YOUR STEP-SISTER, SHE SHALL BE SEVERELY BEATEN.

NO, MY LORD. SPARE HER FOR MY SAKE. SHE IS MY SISTER.



ALL RIGHT, I WILL. BUT SHE SHALL BE BANISHED FROM THE KINGDOM FOREVER WITH HER MOTHER.



ARAMASHOBHA AND THE KING LIVED HAPPILY FOR MANY YEARS, ENJOYING ALL THE LUXURIES OF LIFE. WHEN THEIR SON CAME OF AGE, THEY CROWNED HIM KING AND JOINED THE HOLY ORDER OF ACHARYA VIRABHADRA.